

Dividends at the science fairs

Wine out of camias leaves. Garlic to preserve meat and fish dishes. A multipurpose bicycle for pumping water, for sawing wood, and for keeping the body trim. Plastic, varnish, explosives, adhesives, and nail polish out of resin extracted from aptong leaves.

These are but a few of the hundreds of inventions and discoveries by young Filipinos spawned by the science fairs conducted annually throughout the country under the auspices of the Science Foundation of the Philippines (SFP).

Their discoveries are not yet being commercially produced, but the young scientists hope that their creations eventually will save money for the country by supplanting expensive imported devices with inexpensive native ones.

Already, some of the more notable projects displayed in the science fairs are being patented or have been sent to the Philippine Inventors Commission for further studies.

"Since most discoveries and inventions started from curiosity, we intend to make full use of the natural talents of our youth by motivating them to worthwhile activities," Dr. Juan Salcedo, the 66-year-old president of the Foundation, told *The Republic* recently.

Such activities include membership in science clubs and participation in science quizzes, seminars on scientific journalism for young people, youth science camps, science talent search contests, and the science fairs, which are conducted on the provincial, regional, and national levels.

Himself a scientist of note credited with fortifying milled rice with vitamin B1 to prevent beri-beri, Dr. Salcedo underlined the role of science in the development of the country's natural resources and, ultimately, in hastening national growth.

Since scientists cannot be produced

overnight, the annual science fairs and the more than 1,000 science clubs throughout the country were conceived to serve as "nurseries for the development of the Philippines' scientific leadership."

The science fairs were started on a limited scale in the mid-sixties by the Bureau of Public Schools. The

Foundation, which was created by the government to serve as an advisory body to the National Science Development Board, took over the sponsorship of the fairs in 1970 and expanded the activity to cover the entire nation.

"The present crop of high school students, through a science-oriented education, will ensure the supply of

adequate scientific and technological manpower for the country's needs," Dr. Salcedo said.

The science fairs and science clubs not only provide motivation to the youth but also draw the attention of the community and, consequently, its involvement and support.

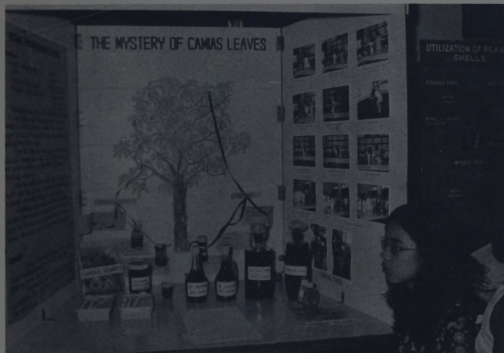
Community involvement is reflected in the enthusiastic support given by various sectors in whatever site a science fair is held and the thousands of viewers flocking to the exhibits. A student's entry becomes not just his own, but that of his school, town, or province.

Last year, the SFP sponsored 11 regional fairs—in Baguio, Lucena, Iloilo, Cabbalagan, Dipolog, Passay, Tarlac, Iriga, Dumaguete, Ozamiz, and Surigao. Figures for another year (1971) showed that a total of 299 schools participated in the regional fairs, fielding 370 investigatory projects in four categories: biology, physics, chemistry, and mathematics. Forty of these projects made it to the national science fair. This year, the national fair was held in Cagayan de Oro City, March 5-9 and showcased 44 of the year's outstanding discoveries.

One of the discoveries arising from the investigatory projects is that by a 15-year-old student of Basilan City High School in Mindanao showing that *Darna trima*, a coconut pest, could be controlled naturally by abetting the breeding of its insect predators. This could be achieved by growing flowering cover plants between coconut trees. Teen-aged scientist Dennis Grino says his finding will save farmers a lot of money which they usually spend for chemical sprays.

Other projects include an investigation into the hitherto unknown uses of the banana, production of tiles and wallboards from refuse, and countless mechanical devices that can prove extremely useful in the home, in the factory, and in the farm.

Achievements like these, says Dr. Salcedo, serve not only to encourage other scientifically inclined youths to cultivate their potentials but also to open the eyes of the Filipino to the fact that, in his quest for development, he can profit immensely from his own ingenuity and the wealth of locally available materials.



Science for schools: motivating the youth for the future.

Show window for local inventions

Dr. Felizardo explained.

The P7.5 million museum (excluding exhibits and laboratory equipment) is expected to promote science consciousness among the people by familiarizing them with the various principles and processes of science and technology and their application to everyday life. It will also serve as a show window of the country's progress in the fields of science and technology.

With a floor area of 10,000 square meters, the museum building will house galleries for the displays and working models, separate rooms for lecture, demonstration, reading, and printing, a film theater, a library, a feasibility studies laboratory, a gadget

shop, a science clubs den, a cafeteria, and even a radio room and studio.

As originally proposed by Dr. Felizardo and accepted by the board of trustees of the SFP, the museum will have two identical towers, one for scientific displays and the other for technological displays.

There will be galleries to accommodate 1,175 display units representing 47 sub-branches of science in one tower and an equal number of display units for 47 sub-branches of technology in the other tower.

The science tower will deal with the pure and basic sciences like biological and physical sciences. The technology tower will deal with the applied

sciences and industrial processes.

To better prepare the Foundation for the management and operation of the museum, Jaime F. Paras, an architect and administrative assistant of SFP President Juan Salcedo, Jr., was sent to London, Paris and Munich last month to study and observe modern museology.

Construction work will start in August this year, and the museum is expected to be completed by April, 1975.

It is envisioned to become a center of SFP-coordinated programs such as the organization and revitalization of youth science clubs, training of science club advisers, holding of scientific film forums, and training of high school students in science journalism and technical writing.

The SFP—in cooperation with school and college authorities, will conduct guided tours to give students a chance to see and operate the scientific and technological exhibits and models in the museum.